

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 11264

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: BRITISH VESSEL AVON FOREST

REF: (A) HONG KONG 11036 (B) TAIPEI 5460 (C) TAIPEI 5498

1. THE HK AND UK GOVERNMENTS ARE GRATEFUL FOR THESE REPORTS.
THEY WOULD APPRECIATE IF IF EMBASSY COULD NOW OBTAIN A
DEFINITIVE RESPONSE TO THE THREE-MONTH GUARANTEE, MAKING THE
FOLLOWING POINTS:

(A) LANDING REFUGEES AT THE FIRST PORT OF CALL IS THE FAIREST,
MOST EFFICIENT AND MOST HUMANE WAY OF TACKKLING A PROBLEM
WHOSE BURDEN IS FELT THROUGHOUT THE REGION. DESPITE THESE
PROBLEMS, HK HAS ALREADY ALLOWED MANY REFUGEES TO BE LANDED
TEMPORARILY. AT PRESENT OVER 2,000 ARE AWAITING RESETTLEMENT
WITHOUT THE GUARANTEE OF EARLY ONWARD MOVEMENT WHICH THE
AUTHORISITES IN TAIWAN HAVE IN THIS CASE.

(B) THE PRECEDENT CREATED BY ACCEPTANCE OF THIS GROUP WOULD
ONLY APPLY TO FUTURE CASES INWHICH A SMILAR GUARANTEE WAS
AVAILABLE.

2. IF THIS GUARANTEE IS REJECTED, EMBASSY SHOULD SAY THAT IT
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IS INTENDED THAT REFUGEES GOING TO THE UK OR CANADA SHOULD
TRANSIT HK. IT WOULD BE APPRECAITED IF THEY COULD REMAIN
TEMPORARILY IN TAIWAN FOR NOT MORE THAN 30 DDAYS, WHILE
ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE FOR THEIR FINAL RESETTLEMENT.

3. AS A LAST RESORT, HKG IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE REFUGEES IN
TRANSIT BY AIR FROM TAIWAN. ICEM/HONG KONG HAVE BEEN ALERTED

TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE AND EXPECT A FLIGHT TO HONG KONG
COULD BE ARRANGED WITHIN 72 HOURS OF REFUGEES BEING GIVEN
PERMITS

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ON LAND. HOWEVER, IN MAKING A REQUEST FOR LANDING
FOR TRANSIT ONLY, HK AND UK GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE GRATEFUL
IF EMBASSY COULD TRY TO OBTAIN AS LONG AS PERIOD AS POSSIBLE
TO FACILITATE PREPARATION OF RECEPTION FACILITIES IN HK, UK AND
CANADA.

4. HK AGENTS OF "AVON FOREST" BELIEVE THAT HER NEXT SCHEDULED
PORT OF CALL MAY NOW BE SINGAPORE AND NOT VANCOUVER. EVEN IF
THIS IS TRUE, HK GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT PERMIT SHIP TO DIVERT TO HK.

5. HKG INTERESTED TO KNOW IF EMBASSY BELIEVE THAT TAIWANESE
POLICY (SEE REFTEL (B) PARA 2(C)) MEANS THAT ALL REFUGEES PICKED
UP BY FISHING VESSELS REGISTERED IN TAIWAN AND WHICH
SUBSEQUENTLY DIVERT TO HK WOULD BE ACCEPTED FOR PROCESSING
IN TAIWAN: OR ONLY THOSE WHO ARE ETHNIC CHINESE.
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